

The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia: the definitive work on bird identification

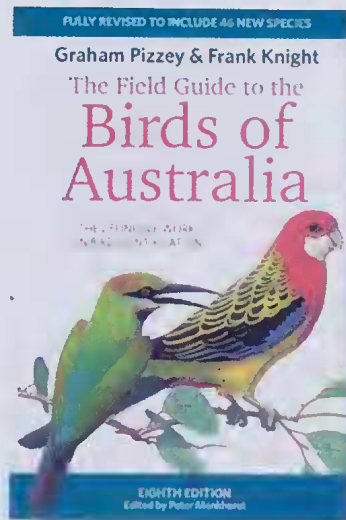
by Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight
edited by Peter Menkhorst

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This amazingly detailed edition of Pizzey and Knight's *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* is a testament to the author's understanding and love of birds. First published in 1980, this eighth edition includes 46 new species, providing detailed information and illustrations on a total of 826 bird species found throughout Australia and the islands of its continental shelf and seas. It includes recent name changes and new information on species distribution, made available since the seventh edition in 2003. As well, a new, quick, visual reference guide to the bird groups is now at the front of the book, making navigation of the guide somewhat easier.

The pages preceding the field guide are of particular interest to the amateur bird watcher. Details here include notes on correct binocular use, the best way to approach birds in the field, and note taking tips, including what to look for when observing the features of a bird. These pages also detail the importance of bird behaviour, habit and voice to identification. In addition, the technical names used to describe features used for easy identification, 'field markings', are explained well. These markings are not only important when it comes to identifying a species of bird, but have essential functions, including signalling alarm and indicating a bird's age, sex and breeding readiness to other birds.

The field guide that follows these informative pages is outstanding. The overall layout is not over crowded as some field guides tend to be, and yet the information given for each bird is more detailed. A description of the colours and markings is given for every species, and a separate description is given when males, females or immature birds appear differently. The habitat, voice, breeding time, eggs, nest, distinctive behaviour and the range and status of the birds are all described clearly for each bird.



The most distinguishing features of each species are italicised also, for ease of identification.

Of course, it is the accompanying illustrations that one will first notice about this book. They are superb. Even just to look through on a rainy day, these illustrations are a pleasure, yet their real application comes when using the book in the field. The colours and identifying marks displayed in these images make identification of new birds a much easier task due to their simple accuracy. These illustrations are the stand-out feature of the field guide and will keep you flicking through the pages and learning new species for much longer than you first expect.

Pizzey and Knight's field guide will continue to play a major role in the further appreciation and love of birds for current bird enthusiasts, and is bound to inspire new 'birdos' of all ages in the process.

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